DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 052 PS 017 581

AUTHOR Piper, Francesca M.
TITLE Stress Management Techniques for Young Children.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 48p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; Nursery Schools; *Preschool Children; *Prosocial Behavior; *Relaxation Training; *Stress Management; *Student Improvement; *Visualization
IDENTIFIERS *Yoga

ABSTRACT

The director of a not-for-profit nursery school adapted the adult stress management techniques of exercise and relaxation for use with 3- to 5-year-old children. Specifically, children were taught visualization techniques and yoga exercises involving deep breathing. The goal of the practicum was to rechannel children's negative stress-related behaviors, such as hitting, pushing, and loud talking, into creative and productive outlets. After going through a series of yoga exercises, children sat or reclined, closed their eyes, and responded to a request to imagine something. After completing the exercise, children talked about their thoughts and, if they wished, responded to their experiences by drawing or painting. After approximately 3 weeks, children could be quieted without the use of yoga. Over a period of 10 weeks, visualization and guided imagery proved to be especially successful in calming and increasing the attention spans of members of the 4- and 5-year-old groups. The group as a whole showed increased self-control after the visualization sessions. Overall classroom mood was calmer, more focused, and more cooperative after the intervention sessions. It is concluded that visualization helps young children deal with problems. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SEP 30 1988

ED299052

Stress Management Techniques for Young Children

by

Francesca M. Piper

Cohort XXV

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Francesca M. Piper
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Practicum Report Presented to the National Master's Program for Child Care Administrators in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Science

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

PS 018281

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

July 1, 1988
Date

Francesca M. Pyper
Signature of Student

Abstract

Stress Management Techniques for Young Children. Piper, Francesca M., 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University, Master's Program for Child Care Administrators. Descriptors: Stress Management / Coping / Counseling Techniques / Relaxation Training / Stress Variables / Anxiety / Parent Child Relationship / Behavior / Behavior Development / Behavior Modification / Exercise / Aerobics / Meditation / Yoga / Young Children / Preschool Children / Preschool Education / Early Childhood Education / Nursery Schools / Parent Expectations / Breathing Techniques / Visualization / Guided Imagery / Imagination Games

Stress is a generally accepted fact of life for adults in today's upwardly mobile society. Stress reduction techniques for adults have proliferated -- including nutrition management, relaxation techniques and exercise. This practicum explores the idea that stress also affects children.

Stress takes its toll on children in many ways. It interferes with their ability to concentrate, their ability to relate to their peers and their ability to believe in themselves, thus affecting their performance and learning ability. In effect, stress can produce stumbling blocks to learning.

The author adapted the adult stress management techniques of exercise (yoga) and relaxation techniques (visualization or guided imagery) for use with three- to five-year-olds. Over a period of ten weeks, visualization and guided imagery proved to be especially successful with the four- and five-year-old group in calming them and increasing their attention span for meaningful activities. The group as a whole showed more self-control after the visualization sessions.

Table of Contents

Page

Authorship Statement i

Abstract ii

Chapter

1. Background 1

2. Study of the Problem 4

Problem Definitions 4

Evidence 6

Analysis of Causes 9

Relationship to the Literature 11

3. Goals and Objectives 16

Goals and Objectives 16

Evaluation 18

4. Solution Strategies 19

Information Collection 19

Solution Strategies 27

Implementation Plan 29

Follow-on 30

5. Results, Conclusions and Recommendations 32

Results 32

Conclusions and Recommendations 33

References Cited 35

Appendices 37

A. Sample Level of Participation Graph 37

B. Sample Change in Behavior Graph 38

C. Materials to Use With Children 39

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

The nursery school, which is the setting for this practicum, is located in a mid-sized city of slightly over 100,000, about 35 miles from New York City. In the past ten years the city has experienced rapid growth and expansion. The corporate headquarters of many large and successful businesses have relocated to this city. The combination of accessibility to metropolitan New York and the business tax advantages, as well as the desirability of this area for family living, has acted as a magnet for many of these companies. The coming of corporations brought a corresponding strong surge in the construction industry. Families followed...families of people looking for work (when most of the nation was experiencing high unemployment, this city's was less than three percent) and families being relocated by their companies. Real estate prices began to climb. The upward spiral moved fast. New companies meant new job opportunities and women with marketable skills returned to the work force rapidly. Women working meant an increased need for child care. Because of this situation, families became anxious about finding quality care for their young children.

The nursery school in this practicum was established in 1954 by the Lutheran Church's Education Committee as a rather informed outreach program to the children of the community. It grew out of the perception on the part of some of the members of the church that there was a need to serve the children of the community. It was one of the first nursery

schools in this community. Although the church is Lutheran, the nursery school is non-denominational. It has a Board of Directors separate from the other church boards and committees.

The school serves three to five year olds and has maintained an enrollment of between 45 and 50 children for most of the past 30 years. The school year is from September through May. The school is not-for-profit with an annual budget of between $50,000 and $60,000. Most of the children live within a two mile radius of the school. The majority of the clientele is middle to upper-middle class families. In most of the families one parent, the father, works full time and many of the mothers work part time. The school is very popular because it does deliver a quality program. It received National Accreditation in July 1987. Most families begin their search early in the school year for the following year. Sometimes inquiries come more than a year in advance. Throughout the year families call inquiring about placement for their young children. The school maintains a waiting list although the chances for placement are slim.

As the Director of the school for the past five years, the author has had an opportunity to interview and speak with literally hundreds of parents of prospective students. It is the policy of the school to take children as they are enrolled until the quota is filled and then to start a waiting list. In addition to interviewing, the director's administrative responsibilities include hiring and supervising staff and program, keeping records, preparing payrolls, ordering supplies, helping prepare the budget and reporting to the Board of Directors. The director also acts as a teacher several afternoons a week. In this

capacity the author has an opportunity to work with the afternoon children. The afternoon program includes lunch and rest time and has a very relaxed atmosphere. Two teachers serve a maximum of 16 children. The children range in age from three to five with the majority always from the older group. This afternoon group, with which the author works, was the group targeted for this practicum.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Definition

According to Abraham Maslow, a pioneer in contemporary theory of human motivation, individuals are motivated by the satisfaction of basic needs. Maslow developed a heirarchy of needs, identifying five basic types: first, the physiological or survival needs; second, the safety needs; third, the love or social need; fourth, the need for esteem and mastery; and fifth, the need for self-actualization. (Maslow, 1954)

The author believes that stress may be a problem for people on all levels of Maslow's hierarchy, the need level of the individual determining the cause of the stress. Much is written about stress and stressors in today's magazines and journals. Selye as cited by Honig(1986) defines stress as a stimulus event of sufficient severity to produce disequilibrium in the homeostatic physiological systems. Selye has demonstrated that the adrenal glands are the body's prime reactors to stress. While a certain level of stress may help the creative and productive capabilities of many people, when stressors become too severe, the body reacts.

Stress is a generally accepted fact of life for adults. Corporate managers carry the stress of responsibility for large companies, financial managers carry the stress of the money markets, teachers carry the stress of dealing with challenging discipline problems while maintaining the ongoing curriculum, farmers carry the stress of keeping the farms

productive, the poor carry the stress of determining where they will eat and/or sleep.

This is a society used to instant gratification, fast foods and disposable items of every sort. People indulge themselves. Society is in a hurry to have everything, to be the best, to look beautiful. The media sells the idea that one should look young, beautiful, rich; one should live in a pretty house with two or three pretty and perfect children; women should be super moms and men should wear white shirts and have large offices; children should have straight teeth, high grades, be good at sports and be "straight". Society expects ethical behavior from those in the public eye and then says privately -- "as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else, I can do whatever I want". Double standards abound. "It's not my problem" is a pervasive idea. It is easy to understand why adults are stressed.

The author believes that it is time to address the problem of stress as it affects children. Children deserve the same respect and understanding that is accorded adults. Because young children are unable to express problems verbally does not mean they do not exist. Children express problems in other ways. Child care workers and parents should learn to recognize the signs of possible tension and stress in children.

Evidence

Elkind (1981) warned that hurried children, whether "clock hurried" or "calendar hurried", often become our country's stressed children. Teachers and parents see stress-related behavior at certain times of the year in all children. During the weeks preceding Halloween and Christmas, children who are normally well-behaved may become almost hyperactive in response to media and family "hype" of the holiday. When a

storm is brewing, children become noisier and more active. During the periods of the full moon, activity levels seem higher. Children seem to respond to stressful times in a physical way and they seem to do this instinctively. The school records indicate probable stress-related behaviors in between six and ten percent of the yearly enrollment. The following anecdotes taken from the records of the author's workplace represent instances of behaviors the author believes are stress-related:

During the years when the Six Million Dollar Man was popular on television, the nursery school had a boy who thought he was the Six Million Dollar Man. A typical play form for this child was to lie down on the ground and tell the others that they could pull the wagon over him, because it would not hurt. The staff was very concerned and brought it to the attention of the parents. The parents thought the whole thing was cute until the day they found him poised on a table preparing to jump through a plate-glass window. The staff felt his stress was caused by a need to become the character he emulated and the clear inability to do so (Maslow's need for esteem and mastery).

Several years ago there was another boy, the second of three children of a woman pediatrician in the city. The other two children were girls. The father was president of his own small company. There was a live-in mother's helper who came from South America and spoke very little English. She had primary responsibility for the three children. The boy was distracted and had a hard time fitting into group situations. He verbalized that he was the only one who did not have someone to share a bedroom with and he wished he had a dog. His mother became pregnant with twins shortly after that and lost them several months into the pregnancy. After that he verbalized that if he could be a "good boy" God would give

him a brother to share his room. He clearly blamed himself for the loss of the babies and carried the heavy stress of guilt which further interfered with his ability to concentrate (Maslow's love or social need).

The author has experienced childhood stress.At the age of four, she and her younger brother and American mother were sent to safety in the United States because of the German threat at the beginning of World War II. She and her brother had been born in Italy where they lived in luxurious surroundings with their Italian father and American mother. As the threat of involvement in the war drew closer, the author's mother acted on the advice of the American Consul and managed to arrange passage on a steamship carrying Americans only. The author understood both Italian and English, but only spoke Italian. Once in the United States, she was unable to communicate with other children. This, combined with the sudden change in surroundings and income level (everything had to be left behind except the barest necessities) and the loss, in effect, of her father, caused her to withdraw and not speak for more than a year. When she spoke again, she spoke English, but had a severe stuttering problem. Although from all appearances the author is capable of carrying on intelligent conversations and seems to be in control, when speaking to groups, she still suffers from anxiety attacks and feelings of inferiority in dealing with her peers. In the 1940's, of course, the whole world was in stress and no one knew or considered stress as a distinct condition that might be relieved or treated.

Stress takes its toll on children in many ways. It interferes with their ability to concentrate, their ability to relate to their peers, their ability to believe in themselves and their self-esteem, thus affecting their performance and learning ability. In effect, stress can

produce stumbling blocks to learning.

Analysis of Causes

Many years ago, one of Norman Rockewell's covers for The Saturday Evening Post was in several parts. Depicted first was the boss reprimanding his employee, second was the employee yelling at his wife, third was the wife yelling at the child and finally, was the child scolding the dog who was chasing the cat. The author believes that the trickle-down theory depicted in that Rockwell cover is an accurate depiction of what stress can do in families. The working person knows what is stressing him (her), the person at home may rationalize accurately, but what about the child? The child is more likely to depend on intuition and emotions than on intellectual understanding and rationalization.

Individual children may find the prospect of a new home or new baby stressful. A grandparent's visit or an impending trip may produce stress. When this happens, caregivers may see the physical response as aggressiveness, hyperactivity, irritability and other types of emotional outbreaks. If the out-of-home caregiver has been alerted to the situation, there is an opportunity to help these children.

The stress that is of particular interest to this author is the expected result of the area's geography -- its proximity to New York City. There has been an influx of corporate headquarters relocating to the area which is the setting for this practicum. Xerox, Champion International, Occidental Petroleum and Exxon are a few. With corporate headquarters come the corporation men and women. They have the high-powered, white-collar jobs that carry the pressure and stress of business in the fast lane. The business pressures filter on down through the family; to live in the "right" area, to belong to the "right" club and to get

children into the "right" school. Anxiety and tension seem to run rampant. The stress is then on the children -- "be good" and "do well" messages are repeated many times. Children don't seem to get the time to be children anymore. So much is expected. The first grade curriculum has filtered down to the full-day kindergarten, children have lessons after school, they are being shuffled from one caretaker to another and there is always the competition of being the best (whatever that represents!).

In the school setting, the traditional response to hyperactivity or restlessness in children has been to tighten the controls and give more work, in order to keep the children busy. The author believes this only masks the problem and may add to the underlying stress-related causes. The outcome can only be more tension and stress. Caregivers must find new ways to approach this problem.

Relationship to the Literature

U. S. News and World Report (1986) devoted its cover story to "Children Under Stress". The article asked the question "Whatever happened to childhood?" and what the late Selma Fraiberg, child psychologist, called "the magic years". The article stated that today's children must cope with "a world in which both parents work, sex and drugs cloud even the grade-school yard and violence is only as far away as the living room television screen". It goes on to cite findings of many child specialists, including Dr. Lawrence Brain, director of child and adolescent services at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington, D.C.; David Elkind, child psychologist and author; T. Berry Brazelton, pediatrician and author; Nicholas Zill, executive director of Child Trends, a research group in Washington, D.C.; Carl Thoresen, professor

of education and psychology at Stanford University; Polly Greenberg, publications director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; Aletha Huston, co-director of the University of Kansas Center for Research on the Influence of Television on Children; and many other teachers, principals, professors and psychologists at all levels of education.

This U. S. News article gives us a good overview of the trends being seen in home, family and school life. Department of Labor figures on working parents indicate that 50 percent of households where both parents work, have children five and under. In single-parent households, with that parent working, 58 percent have children five and under. Households where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is at home with the children are decreasing rapidly. Broken homes are on the increase. The rate of suicide for youths under 15 has tripled since 1960. Most of the pressures on children stem from new American life-styles. Some stress is caused by status-conscious parents. Children's daily schedules are likely to be dictated by mothers' and fathers' working schedules. The curriculum demands in public school are shifting downwards -- what used to be taught in second grade is now taught in first grade and the first-grade curriculum is now moving into kindergarten. Society is warned that since children tend to repeat parental patterns and because the long-term effects of stress for tomorrow's adults have yet to be determined, we may be "delivering time bombs of potential destruction into society". (Salk)

James Uphoff, an Ohio education professor, and June Gilmore, an Ohio psychologist, found that children entering kindergarten below the age of five years and three months did not do as well in school subsequently as

those who started later -- their recommendation: think twice before starting children early in school.

The findings of 20 years of research by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation indicate that children attending preschool, where play is emphasized, require fewer special educational services later.

In a survey of 170 teachers, each with 20 years of experience working with middle class children, Zimiles (1982), who was studying the changing American child, found that today's children know more on the surface, are more independent and are more verbal than pre-television children. Most important, the study showed that the boundaries between child-life and adult-life are blurring. In addition, the rise in divorce, single-parent families and women working was linked to less adult reliability in children's lives and to widening the gap between children and childhood.

By the time children graduate from high school, reports the American Academy of Pediatrics, as cited by Balaban (1987), they will have spent more time watching television than attending school; resulting in obesity, lack of physical fitness and a distorted view of life. Children's exposure to adult "secrets" serves to push them pell-mell into adults' realms -- "the electronic media find it impossible to withhold any secrets" and 'without secrets' there can be no childhood. (Postman,1982)

In "Stress Signals in Kindergarten" from The New York Times, as cited by Balaban (1987), parents are advised to pay close attention to a child who:

- insists either that school work is too hard or boring
- says that he/she has no friends
- says that he/she does not want to go to school
- constantly asks teacher if it is time to go home
- reverts to thumbsucking, infantile speech, nail biting or bed wetting.

The following "Telltale signs of stress in young children" comes from Honig (1986)

Doesn't respond to friendly caregiver overtures
Daydreams frequently
Has grave, solemn face; rarely smiles or laughs (check first for iron deficiency; see Honig & Oski, 1984)
Has frequent prolonged temper tantrums
Cries a great deal for months after entry into group care (even though caregivers have been gentle and responsive)
Acts sullen, defiant (says "I don't care" frequently when caregiver explains how misbehavior has hurt another)
Punishes self through slapping, head banging, or calling self bad names ("bad boy")
Is overly sensitive to mild criticism
Flinches if teacher or visiting adult approaches with caressing or reassuring gesture of outstretched arm
Reports proudly to teacher that he or she has hurt another child
Is overly vigilant about others' misdeeds, tattles, or jeers
Is highly demanding of adults although usually fairly self-sufficient
Bullies or scapegoats and may get other children to join in
Carries out repetitive, stereotyped play that may have destructive aspects
Clings to, shadows caregiver, although in group for months
Is unable to carry out sustained play with preshcool peers
Has constant need to sleep although physically well
Is preoccupied with frightening images of monsters or other violent, threatening figures
Has dull, vacant expression, as if trying to ward off thinking about stressful trauma or tries to deny stressful feelings
Is hyperactive or restless, wanders around room, touches and disturbs toys and games, cannot settle into constructive play
Displays disturbed bodily functions, has trouble with feeding, constipation or diarrhea, soils self frequently, months after toilet training is completed
Has trembling of hands or facial twitches although apparently well
Talks compulsively abcout physical dangers and threats
Grinds teeth during naptime
Has rigid facial expressions from taut muscles
Displays loss of perceptual acuity
Displays reduced attentional capacity; even though caregiver is very clear in communicating, the child cannot focus well on activity or request
Stimulates self constantly (by prolonged thumb-sucking, masturbation, rocking body back and forth, or other such behaviors), which children normally do occasionally for self-comfort

Feels jittery
Stutters, uses disfluent speech, or refuses to talk in group (older preschooler)
Is clumsy on easy manual tasks due to muscular tensions
Frequently acts aggressively against others, even adults
Has nightmares. Honig (1986)

Although the subject has not been directly addressed, the literature clearly shows us that there is as much need for stress management techniques for children as there is for adults. Most experts agree that communication is the best advice for parents attempting to minimize stress on children -- communicate, respect the child's individuality, and don't push. A backlash to the cult of the super-kid may be beginning. A few states promote developtmental screening tests to determine placement of children. In New Hampshire, "readiness classes" use an informal, play-oriented approach for children who score low on readiness tests. At the L. J. Campbell School in Atlanta, kindergarten has been broken down into steps to allow children to move at their own pace. (U. S. News and World Report 1986) In the setting for this practicum, more parents of children with fall and winter birthdays are electing to hold their children out of kindergarten for an extra year in the hope of increasing their chances for succes in school.

David Elkind has been warning for years that pushing young children is leading to childhood stress, depression and learning problems.. From a development viewpoint, the emphasis in school should be on the learner rather than only what is to be learned, (Balaban 1987)

In an effort to relieve the increasing pressure on preschool programs to become more academic (thus creating more stress on children), Hamlin (1985) initiated a plan to develop more laughter and give children more flexibility in a less teacher-controlled classroom.

Mancus (1976) used "strategies for stimulating right hemispheric, creative and intuitive thinking" providing a "non-threatening means for expressing anxiety and concern" to help a child better understand his "feelings as related to situations and experiences" in his life, allowing the child to gain some "sense of" personal power or control.

Academic pressure should not be part of children's learning experiences. Young children need time for learning. Caregivers should be responding to how children learn through the manipulation of objects and the interaction with their environment and their peers. (Williams & Kamii, 1985)

Zeitlin (1985) developed a coping with stress model while working with family stress. The model is used to help people understand the process of stress and coping and then to examine and assess their coping styles. It is also used for family intervention planning.

In all the cases cited, the results of the efforts were successful, indicating that information, understanding, and communication do help people.

Children have a special and positive way of "learning through squirming, wiggling, jumping, reaching and touching". In looking at the beginning of a trend to hold children out of school a year longer, in reaction to the trend to push academic work into kindergarten and even preschool -- educators, caregivers and parents should think again about designing the program to fit the child. (Balaban 1987)

Trying to fit the child into an earlier and earlier academic program is stressful to many children. If children were taught to cope with stress, would it not ease the education process? If time were built into the daily schedule for relaxation and discussion and thinking,

would we not see more creative and less stressed children?

Adults must learn balance in their dealings with children and not get impatient or push children too early.

Chapter 3

GOALS AND OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

Goals and Outcomes

The author used techniques which are presently employed by adults for managing stress and tailored them to suit the needs of young children. Stress management for adults falls ihto several areas: nutrition, exercise, meditation and various other relaxation techniques.

Many major companies are finding less absenteeism, better employee morale and increased productivity are the benefits of programs which emphasize physical fitness as well as stress management and nutritional counseling. (Dotson 1985) Corporate fitness centers, ranging from a single room to entire buildings, emphasize the new wellness programs. (Lau 1985)

Good nutrition is part of the general curriculum for the school and is discussed on a regular basis. Since there is no way to control what children eat while they are away from school, the author did not include nutritional goals. Instead, since the author believes stress in children is manifested in physical ways, she concentrated on the physical aspects of stress and verbal communication skills.

The author taught relaxation through yoga (a form of exercise) and visualization (a form of meditation). After going through a series of yoga exercises, the children were asked to sit or lie down with their eyes closed and imagine something. After the time for imagining, the children were asked to talk about their thoughts, and, if they wished, to draw or paint in response to their experiences.

In young children, stress related problems often manifest themselves as behavioral problems (hitting, grabbing, pushing, loud voices, name calling, throwing and/or breaking things). The author's goal was to rechannel this negative stress behavior into creative and productive outlets and to help children understand and verbalize their feelings through language arts and creative art such as painting.

Over a period of ten weeks, the author taught the four-year-old group of children a simple way to turn their energy from negative to positive, thereby changing the unacceptable behaviors. The improvement in behavior corresponded with the child's level of participation. Two bar graphs were used: one, level of participation (Appendix A); and two, change in behavior (Appendix B). The level of participation was graded 0 to 3, 0 representing no participation and 3 representing full participation. Since specific behaviors to be changed varied from child to child, the corresponding change was measured on the behavior graph as "improved", "worsened" or "unchanged". Tracing paper was used for the graphs so that one could be placed over the other for evaluation purposes.

The author's objective to reduce stress was gradually met over the ten-week period. All the children in the group were asked and encouraged to participate but no one was forced to do so. During the first three-week period, the children were taught, and practiced, the techniques of yoga and visualization. During the middle weeks, four through seven, the children showed more comfort with the process and overcame their shyness or embarrassment in talking about their feelings. By the final weeks, the relaxation program was a familiar and accepted part of the children's day.

Evaluation

In order to document the outcomes, the author videotaped the teaching sessions three times during the ten-week implementation period. The video shows the children before, during and after the relaxation sessions. The videotape gives the viewer the opportunity to see the progress of the children in their environment. It was also used to transfer the required information to the graphs for evaluation. (See Appendices A and B)

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Information Collection

Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, believes that most of today's psychology of learning is beside the point -- the "humanistic point" -- and that today's education is an acquisition of skills and capacities that are external and not intrinsic to the human character. He believes that the goal of education should ultimately be "self-actualization" -- "the development of the fullest height that the human species can stand up to....it is helping the person to become the best that he is able to become". Maslow (1971:169) This, of course, would mean major changes in education.

Archibald MacLeish, as cited by Maslow, at the opening ceremonies of a Lincoln Center Festival (New York City) said, in part:

> Information without human understanding is like an answer without its question -- meaningless. And human understanding is only possible through the arts. Maslow (1971:171)

Maslow suggests that the human being has higher needs in his biological make-up; for instance, the need to be dignified, the need to be respected, and the need to be free for self-development. By his own admission, this has "revolutionary implications". He believes this revolutionary idea is the "growing tip" of mankind and will flourish perhaps a hundred years from now.

In describing peak experiences, Maslow says that humanistic science

now knows how to encourage peak experiences. This would mean changing people, helping them to see things differently -- having different "cognitions" and, for some, in a certain sense, a moving "toward living happily ever after". (1971:176) He believes that by conscious effort and understanding of the experiences that most easily produce peak experiences, a model can be found bywhich to re-evaluate teaching.

Patricia Carrington, a clinical psychologist and lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Princeton University, with her psychiatrist husband, Dr. Harmon S. Ephron and some of their colleagues in the field of psychotherapy, have investigated meditation in a systematic way and have explored "the potential uses of meditation in the field of mental health". Carrington (1977:xvii) As a result of their research, Dr. Carrington developed her own method of meditation, Clinically Standardized Meditation, presently being used successfully in a number of organizations and by individuals interested in learning a simple, Westernized technique of meditation. This Westernized form of meditation has its roots in the ancient meditative techniques but is used for practical purposes, not spiritual development.

Carrington suggests that we have all experienced "the meditative mood". Abraham Maslow uses the term "peak experiences". The following are some examples of these experiences.

> A mother holding her infant close is united with the child in a gentle rhythm as she rocks and sings to it.
> A traveler leaning against a tree listens to the sounds of the breeze rustling the treetops and barely senses his own breath; it is as though he had "become" the wind.
> A vacationer lies on the beach, giving herself over quietly to the sun and the air, engulfed by the lulling rhythms of the sea.
> A man hears organ tones cascading through a cathedral; as they vibrate through him, he is carried into a reverie where memories and images of childhood flood him -- he has become

> a child again.
> A camper gazes into a lowering fire following the trail of the glowing ashes as they drift upward and fade into darkness; she feels as though she, too, were floating gently through space.
> A rock climber on a mountaintop breathes-in the silence above the earth; he is shaken by its immensity and his mind becomes as still as the snows in the mountain passes.
> Carrington (1977:3-4)

Carrington and Ephron's studies have shown that meditation practiced on a regular basis results in advantages for the meditator, that people who have learned Carrington's Clinically Standardized Meditation (CSM) can use a kind of "mini-meditation" at strategic times during the day when stress is heavy. In a brief reference to education, Carrington suggests that if meditation is to be used in schools, it will have to be standardized and entirely free of any religious connotation. She speculates that the use of meditation could involve regular "meditation breaks" to ease classroom tension and to help students concentrate; that group meditation before exams might reduce test anxiety; that meditation before the day's work on a creative project might diminish self-criticism and permit ideas to flow easily, and that meditation might be used off-and-on during the day to "recharge the battery". (Carrington, 1977)

In her book Unicorns are Real, Barbara Meister Vitale discusses right-brain and left-brain approaches to learning with an emphasis on a right-brain approach. Vitale suggests that some people are left-brain learners and some are right-brain learners. The two hemispheres of the brain, says Vitale, are symmetrical in structure and asymmetrical in function. People who can visualize are processing in the right hemisphere and are called visual learners. Those who comprehend by hearing are processing in the left-hemisphere and are called auditory

learners. Still others, who cannot localize their comprehension are usually called haptic learners and learn by experience. The standard public school curriculum is taught in a lecture/study manner which is well suited to the left-brain learner.

Vitale suggests that there are several theories explaining the development of hemispheric specialization -- that it takes place gradually, that it is present at birth but not apparent until the neural connection between the hemispheres is completed, or that lateralization for language is present at birth but that other functions develop slowly. Regardless of the theories, parents and educators know that young children switch hands frequently when using crayons, scissors and eating utensils. Many children have not developed hand dominance when starting kindergarten, indicating that hemispheric specialization or lateralization has not yet occurred and that many children are not ready for the demanding curriculum of today's kindergarten.

According to Vitale, today's school curriculum stresses reading, language, phonics, symbols and details. Children are "talked at" most of the time. This teaches the left-brain child whose left hemispheric approach to life is "part-to-whole". It does not help the right-brained child whose right hemispheric approach looks at things holistically and in over-all pictures and whose learning mode is "whole-to-part". The child with a dominant right hemisphere starts with the answer, a total concept, or perceives the whole pattern and discovers a divergent conclusion. Very often he experiences difficulty with "sequential thought". These children are sometimes accused of cheating because they can give an answer but cannot tell where, how or why they got it. They may try to make the environment fit their needs -- tendency may show up as

behavior problems. These children learn through absurdities. The more absurd the better, especially in the area of discipline. (Vitale, 1982)

If, indeed, Vitale is correct in her work -- and the author believes she is --the educational system of this country has done a disservice to countless children and is continuing to do so by not recognizing that there are different learning styles. If teachers were taught to recognize divergent learning styles and were also taught how to teach to these different styles, classrooms might become places where a real love for learning could take place and be nurtured and where teachers could truly experience the joy of teaching.

David Elkind, in his book The Hurried Child, states that childhood is the "most basic right of children". Elkind (1981:200) That does not mean always a happy, innocent period but that it is an important period of life to which children are entitled. Elkind also says that children are being hurried into adulthood, that there is too much emphasis on the basics in contemporary education without an equal emphasis on personal expression through the arts, and that educators and parents need to balance time spent on work and play by asserting the value of the arts in schools. He suggests that children will work better, learn better and grow better if time spent learning the basics is alternated with time for "avenues for self-expression...time and money spent on the arts enhances learning and development by reducing the stress of hurrying and by giving children an aesthetic perspective to balance the workday one". Elkind (1981:197)

Elkind suggests that play is nature's way of dealing with stress for children and adults. He believes children must be given time and opportunity for pure play. Elkind shares this thought:

> Over the years, I have made it a practice to take a little time for myself each day, to enjoy a sunset, watch a sparrow, admire a snowflake. Such moments can and should be shared with children. I also take a moment to review the events of the day, to evaluate, without regret, how well I lived up to the goals of devoting full energies to the task at hand. My sense is that such practices are communicated to the children we live with and that the more we incorporate stress relief valves into our daily routines, the more children can learn similar strategies. (1981:199)

It does not matter what a person's philosophy of life happens to be, it is important to see childhood as a "stage of life", not just as "the anteroom of life". Elkind (1981:199)

Stress management is a relatively new field with many areas as yet to be explored. One of these areas is the adaptation of adult stress management techniques for children. There have been many professionals in the fields of psychiatry, medicine, psychology and education exploring the field of stress management. Louise Binder Scott, a writer for T. S. Denison, tells us "children as well as adults can suffer from stress. All children benefit from periods of rest and feelings of serenity...". Feeling quiet is something many children need to learn. For these children definite structured times of relaxation are necessary. According to Scott, some of the expected benefits of structured relaxation are:

- a decrease in disruptive and aggressive behavior
- an increase in attention span
- a satisfying self-image
- and control of anxiety and tension (especially for children with oral communication difficulties or emotional problems). Scott (1986: 3)

This author believes there is a connecting thread in the writings of Maslow, Carrington, Vitale, Elkind and Scott -- the quest for returning to the children of our society their right to a childhood --

time to be children, to play for its intrinsic value, to be understood as children, to hear and appreciate good music and art, to take part in dance, drama, and movement, to use their imaginations and to find joy in childhood, as a balance to the necessary understanding of reality and the work of the "core" curriculum. These authors believe that by a balance of the arts and the "core" curriculum in schools, there will be less stress on children.

Children can be taught relaxation and stress reduction techniques to help balance today's busy life styles. There are a number of authors exploring various possibilities. In the T. S. Denison Company book Quiet Times, Scott offers the reader practical suggestions for planned relaxation activities. The book contains four sections: "Stories For Relaxation", "Devices For Relaxation", "Action Rhymes For Relaxation", and "Quiet Poems". All the suggestions are designed for young children, pre-school through first grade. They have ben tested with young children and have been used successfully with both small and large groups of children.

In his book of imagination games for children, Put Your Mother On The Ceiling, Richard de Mille states: "We are now ready, it seems, to do something for the little boy who told his teacher he could not concentrate on his school work because his imagination kept getting into fights with his mind". (1967:xiv) de Mille tells us "why we should put mother on the ceiling". He states that there is a war going on between reality and imagination and suggests that the battleground is childhood: on one side is the child -- full of imagination, wonder, fantasies, misconceptions and unreliable reporting; on the other side are parents, teachers, peer groups and police, insisting on reality, truth, accuracy,

conformity and obedience. The "purpose of putting mother on the ceiling is to stop the war, so that reality and imagination can live in harmony". de Mille (1967:3)

de Mille suggests that through over-emphasis on "teaching by telling, giving the facts, and accepting right answers only", we are creating people who are dull and unimaginative. Teaching "good judgment, originality, fluency and flexibility of thought, the ability to redefine situations or to see their implications" should be the main purpose of education. (1967:6)

In a reference to television, de Mille reminds us that it is passive, it does nothing to foster imagination. When the television fantasy is carried over to children's play, the child is simply accepting a ready-made product -- the play is not imaginative, it is imitative. When a book (not a picture book) is read to a child, the child must provide the visual content, therefore the child uses his imagination. The imagination games in de Mille's book can help develop listening and language skills, can stimulate the imagination and can be used as a tool for dealing with children's concerns.

Kenneth K. Cohen has written a small book titled Imagine That! A Child's Guide to Yoga. In his book, Cohen states that yoga is an "age-old science, dedicated to the health of the body and to peace, strength and clarity of mind". The book has colorful illustrations of simple yoga positions. It is based on Hatha Yoga -- "a comprehensive system of gentle, non-stress postures, stretches, balancing positions, breathing, relaxation and meditation practices". Cohen (1983:7)

Deborah Rozman, Ph.D. teaches meditation to public school children in classroom settings in California communities. Teachers using her

methods report remarkable improvement in learning abilities. Experiments in schools and in families show that meditation:

improves concentration
relieves anxiety
establishes trust
enriches friendships
encourages self-discipline
brings love into the family
releases boundless creativity. (1976)

Rozman describes the "procedure of meditation". Briefly, it is as follows: sit upright with a straight but relaxed back, close your eyes, tense - then relax your body several times, take some deep breaths and let go of any remaining tension, relax your mind and concentrate with your imagination. She suggests, with children ages three to five, it is good to help them become calm and pull their energies together through a process called "Centering". Rozman recommends the use of simple yoga positions before a meditation -- to get the wiggles out (this author's interpretation). After a meditation, she suggests an outlet to which energy can be directed. Rozman has also prepared a "guided imagery" tape entitled Meditating With Children based on her five-step method. (Rozman, 1976)

Solution Strategy

After investigating the available literature, the author decided to work with a combination of relaxation techniques to help children of pre-school age. The author worked with the regular teachers (two at the three-year-old level and two at the four-year-old level) and the two dance/movement specialists available at the school where this practicum took place.

In order to implement this plan properly, the persons responsible for each part of this plan were trained and the techniques were carefully monitored. This required staff willingness and cooperation. No special materials were needed and this plan fit easily into the daily schedule. The simplicity of the plan indicated it could be used in any setting at any time; however, the responsible person would need to learn some simple yoga and meditation techniques.

This author has had the opportunity to attend a class on C.S.M. with Patricia Carrington, a clinical psychologist, and has listened to the audio casette version of her course on meditation. In addition, she has been involved in the planning and implementation of a series of workshops for children, ages four to ten, which included the use of guided imagery, meditation, and creative art as a response. The purpose of that series of workshops was to foster creativity in children, or, more precisely, to help children hold on to their natural creativity. The author has also taken some Hatha Yoga classes.

The techniques this author used were a combination of exercise (yoga), visualization or guided imagery (meditation), and art and/or language activities as a response to the meditation. The goal of these activities was to quiet the child physically, to soothe the child's mind, and then to help the child to respond to the process through discussion and creative art.

Discussion as well as art activities were used to give the child an opportunity to begin to understand how he/she can control his/her own body and its reactions to stress and/or anxious feelings. These techniques were used in a non-spiritul way, following the suggestion of Dr. Carrington. Not only have these strategies proven successful for adults, and in a few areas of the country for children as well, but they have the

and in a few areas of the country for children as well, but they have the added advantage of not requiring extra space, materials, personnel or money.

Implementation Plan

First, the author held a special staff meeting to present this proposal. After the plan was presented, the meeting was open for brainstorming in certain areas; however, the author retained the right of final decision on all matters related to the implementation of this proposal. The author expected to insert relaxation and stress reduction techniques into the regular activities of the shcool day.

General implementation was in three parts on days when the dance/movement specialists were at the pre-school. First, the children were asked to try some yoga positions as part of their regularly scheduled dance or movement time. Second, they moved to the "quiet activity" room where the author led them in quiet visualization (a game of the imagination). Finally, the children had time for discussion and art work through which they responded to the visualization if they wished. The regular teachers were available to write the children's feelings and descriptions on their papers if they so chose, and for more discussion in a small group or one-to-one format.

On other days, the regular rest-time after lunch also offered an opportunity to practice relaxation techniques. The author used breathing exercises and/or quieting exercises, a visualization time and quiet music -- usually Steven Halpern's Lullabies and Sweet Dreams (1982). At the end of the resting time, the children were asked to sit quietly and share anything they wised -- their feelings, what they "saw" (imagined), their thoughts. The author expected the children to feel

calmer, to be less physically aggressive and to learn respect for the feelings of others.

Implementation began April 15, 1988 and ran until the end of school (ten weeks). The levels of participation (from none to high) were graphed on a scale of zero to three. Changes in behavior were also graphed: improved, worsened or no change. The children were video-taped three times during the implementation period -- the first, fifth and final weeks. The video-tape sessions offered the author the opportunity to review, assess and revise as necessary.

Follow-on

As the author expected, adult stress management techniques can be successfully modified for use with young children and will become an integral part of the program of the pre-school featured in this practicum. In addition, she found that there is more available literature specifically geared to stress management for children than she expected. (See Appendix C for a list of materials compiled for use by the Yonkers School System by Adele C.Fagon, Enrichment Teacher for Grades 2 - 6) After reading through a number of articles and books, yoga and visualization were chosen for use in this practicum. The purpose of yoga was to bring the children from an active state to a quiet, meditative state. Since the dance/ movement specialists were more familiar with yoga than the author, they were asked to end their lessons with yoga. Then, the author asked the children to sit quietly, with eyes closed, breathe deeply and play an imagination game with her. She described a calm and tranquil scene for them to visualize. Then the author played quiet music, moving among the group to settle children who were having a more difficult time visualizing and who might disturb those who were more involved in the process.

Finally, the music was turned off and the children had a talking and sharing time. The whole process took from 20 to 30 minutes.

Three and one-half weeks into the practicum, the dance/movement teacher became ill and the author tried the visualization without the yoga and found it worked just as well. The slow, deep-breathing seemed to quiet the children. After that, the author dispensed with the yoga and used deep-breathing as preparation for visualization.

Through the method of trial and error, the author discovered that the visualization which incorporated things well-known to the children were the most effective -- baby animals, flowers, butterflies, rainbows, soap bubbles, balloons. If they were asked to visualize some things with which they were not familiar, such as being in a sailboat or outer-space, they simply could not follow the spoken words.

Any pre-school desiring to use relaxation and stress management techniques could do so. These techniques do not cost money, no special equipment is necessary, and minimal teacher training is required.

Chapter 5

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The author's objectives were to find a way to reduce stress-related problems in pre-school children, to rechannel negative stress behavior (hitting, grabbing, pushing, loud voices, name-calling, etc.) into creative and productive outlets, and to help children understand and verbalize their feelings through language and creative arts.

Over a period of ten weeks, the author worked with a group of six boys and four girls in the nursery school where she is the director. She used a combination of modified adult stress management techniques to address what she believes to be stress-related behaviors in children whose families are affected by this town's explosive expansion into a city and "life in the fast lane". The children were taught yoga, deep-breathing and visualization, or guided imagery. The results were positive from the beginning and became more effective as time went by and the children became more familiar with the process. Although the process was simple from the start, about one-third of the way through the ten weeks, the author unexpectedly found that the children could be quieted without the use of the yoga. After that, quiet deep-breathing and guided imagery were used successfully, thus simplifying the process further.

Most of the three- and four-year-olds were easily able to let their imaginations go with the guided imagery. Out of a group of ten children,

only one boy seemed to resist relaxing and allowing his imagination free rein. Even when there was not active participation in the visualization, the children seemed to respond to the suggestions and subsequent discussions. The overall classroom mood was quieter, calmer, more focused and more cooperative after these sessions. The author's belief that this was a direct result of the visualization activity was borne out by the graphs. Learning to verbalize their thoughts and feelings seems to allow children to release some of their pent-up negative energy and clear the way for more creative and productive work and play.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is only one conclusion -- visualization helps young children deal with problems. Since they use their imaginations all the time, guided imagery is a natural extension and comes easily to them. It is a wonderful tool for the pre-school teacher and should be included in the regular curriculum.

For pre-schools considering the use of visualization, the author recommends the following:

....know your children

....work with small groups (not more than ten, if possible)

....use images familiar to your children

....use popular images more than once (as in a favorite story book)

....try not to use visualization every day; keep visualization/ fantasy as a treat for the more difficult days

....be flexible, be prepared to change your lesson plan to suit your group

....try incorporating visualization into circle time or talking time

The author hopes to publish on article concerning the use of visualization in the pre-school setting. In addition, she is considering the possibility of preparing a "how-to" video tape.

The author feels that there is an added bonus to the idea of teaching relaxation and stress management to children. The added bonus may well be what Abraham Maslow calls "intrinsic" in education. Here, again, are his words on education:

> Finally, the impression that I want to try to work out -- and I would certainly suggest that this is a problem for everyone involved in arts education -- is that effective education in music, education in art, education in dancing and rhythm, is intrinsically far closer than the usual "core curriculum" to intrinsic education of the kind that I am talking about, of learning one's identity as an essential part of education. If education doesn't do that, it is useless. Education is learning to grow, learning what to grow toward, learning what is good and bad, learning what is desirable and undesirable, learning what to choose and what not to choose. In this realm of intrinsic learning, intrinsic teaching, and intrinsic education, I think that the arts, and especially the ones that I have mentioned, are so close to our psychological and biological core, so close to this identity, this biological identity that rather than think of these courses as a sort of whipped cream or luxury, they must become basic experiences in education. I mean that this kind of education can be a glimpse into the infinite, into ultimate values. This intrinsic education may very well have art education, music education, and dancing education as its core. (I think dancing is the one I would choose first for children. It is the easiest for the two-, three-, or four-year-old children -- just plain rhythm.). Such experiences could very well serve as the model, the means by which perhaps we could rescue the rest of the school curriculum from the value-free, value-neutral, goal-less meaninglessness into which it has fallen. Maslow (1971:178-179)

References Cited

Balaban, Nancy. "Balancing Priorities for Children." March 1987. ERIC ED 280-599.

Brody, Beth, et.al. "Children Under Stress," U.S. News and World Report. October 27, 1986, pp. 58-63.

Carrington, Patricia, Ph.D. Freedom in Meditation. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977.

Carrington, Patricia, Ph.D. Learning to Meditate. Kendall Park, New Jersey, Pace Educational Systems Inc.,1978.

Cohen, Kenneth K. Imagine That! A Child"s Guide to Yoga. Santa Barbara, California: Santa Barbara Books, 1983.

de Mille, Richard. Put Your Mother on the Ceiling. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Dotson, Beth. "Spending Money to Save Money." Rough Notes. June 1985, pp. 38-40.

Elkind, David. The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1981.

Flora, Sherrill B. Time Together, A Family Activity Book. Minneapolis, Minnesota: T.S.Denison & Company, Inc., 1986.

Halpern, Steven. Lullabies and Sweet Dreams, The Anti-Frantic Alternative. Corte Madera, California: The Halpern Sounds, 1982.

Hamlin, Barbara B., "Make More Time for Laughter in a Pre-School Setting." September, 1985. ERIC ED 265-971.

Honig, Alice Sterling. " Stress and Coping in Children (Part 1)." Young Children. May 1986, pp.50-62.

Honig, Alice Sterling. "Stress and Coping in Children (Part 2) Interpersonal Family Relationships." Young Children. July 1986, pp. 47-58.

Lau, Barbara, "Corporate Fitness Programs," NRECA Management Quarterly. Spring 1985, pp. 20-24.

Mancus, Diane S., and Philip M. Mancus, "How is a Moving Van Like a Camel? Creative Strategies for Helping a Child Deal With Anxiety." ERIC ED 280-599.

Maslow, Abraham H. The Farther Reaches of Human Nature. New York: The Viking Press, 1971.

Maslow, Abraham H. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954.

Postman, Neil. The Dissappearance of Childhood. New York: Dell, 1982.

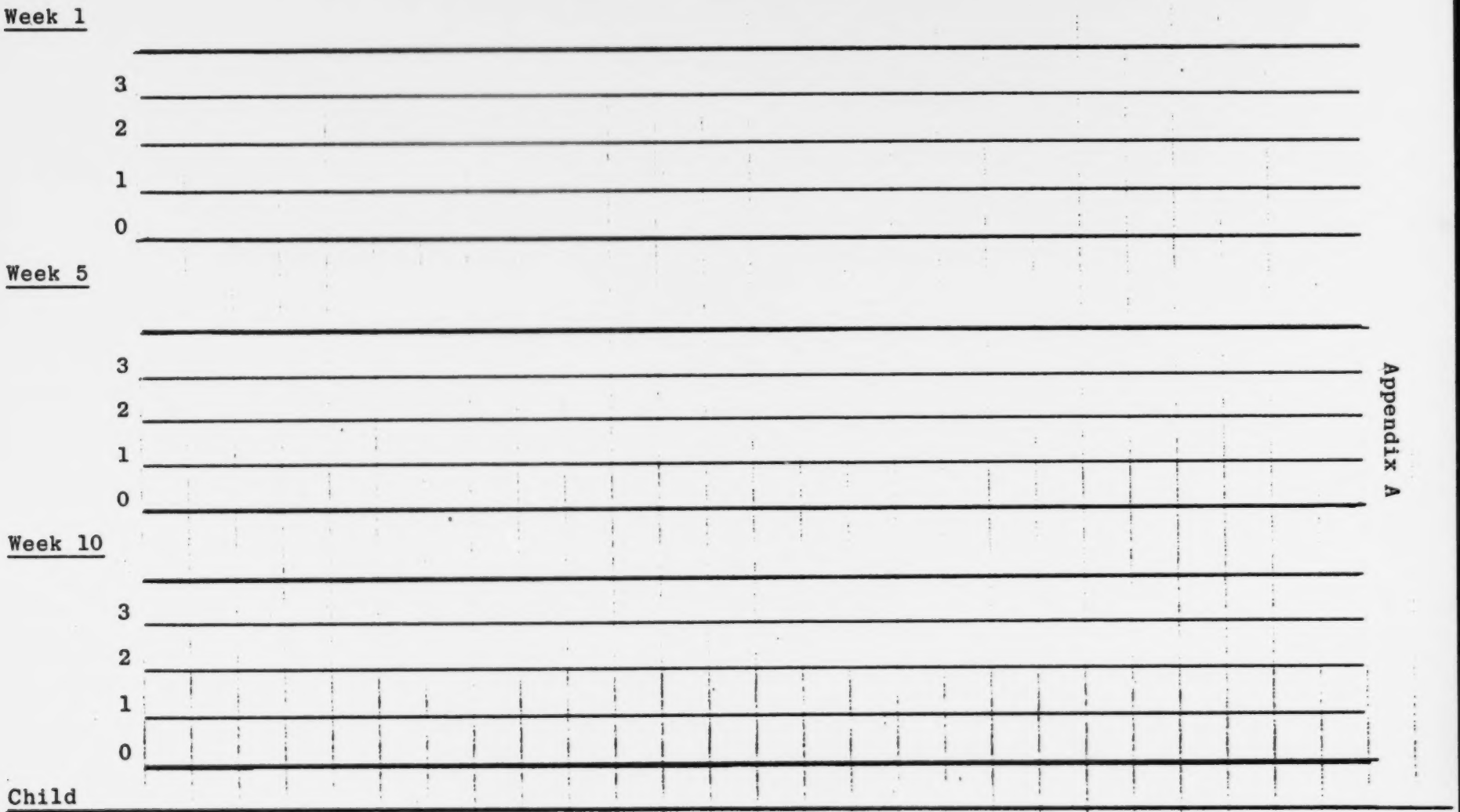
Rozman, Deborah. Meditation for Children. Boulder Creek, California: University of the Trees Press, 1976.

Scott, Louise Binder. Quiet Times, Relaxation Techniques for Early Childhood. Minneapolis: T.S.Denison & Company, Inc., 1986.

Vitale, Barbara Meister. Unicorns Are Real. Rolling Hills Estates, California: Jalmar Press, 1982.

Wallis, Claudia, et.al. "Stress: Can We Cope?" Time. June 6, 1983, pp. 48-54.

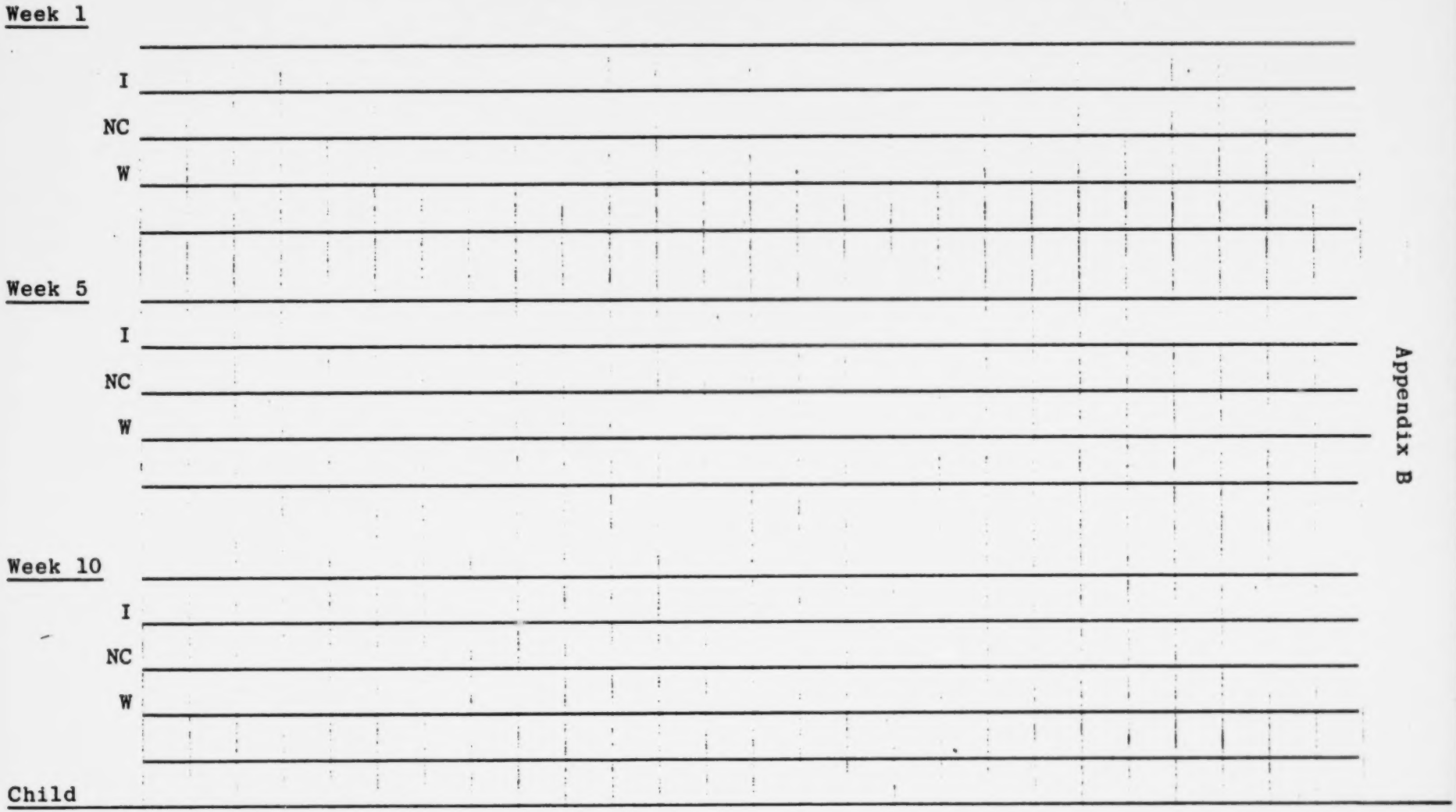
Level of Participation



3- High level of participation
2- Average level of participation
1- Low level of participation
0- No participation

Appendix A

Change of Behavior



I = Improved behavior
W = Worsened behavior
NC= No change

Appendix B

Appendix C

Enrichment Teacher, Grades 2 - 6, Yonkers, N.Y.

USING IMAGERY AND VISUALIZATION IN THE CLASSROOM

The following books deal mainly with imagery techniques that can be used in the classroom. They include many imagery exercises.

1. Bagley, Michael T. and Hess, Karin K.
   200 WAYS OF USING IMAGERY IN THE CLASSROOM - A guide for developing imagination & creativity in elementary schools (1982) Trillium Press, P.O. Box 209, Monroe, N.Y. 10950 (914) 783-2999

2. Bagley, Michael
   USING IMAGERY IN CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
   Trillium Press (same as above)

3. Herzog, Stephanie
   JOY IN THE CLASSROOM (1982)
   University of the Trees Press, Boulder Creek, Ca. 95006

4. Hess, Karin K.
   ENHANCING WRITING THROUGH IMAGERY (1987)
   Trillium Press (see #1)

5. Murdock, Maureen
   SPINNING INWARD - USING GUIDED IMAGERY WITH CHILDREN (1982)
   Peace Press, 3828 Willat Ave. Culver City, Ca. 90230

****

The following books have sections on guided imagery or offer other useful information about the creative process.

1. De Mille, Richard
   PUT YOUR MOTHER ON THE CEILING - Children's Imagination Games (1967, 1973)
   Penguin Books, 40 W. 23rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10010

2. Ferrucci, Piero
   WHAT WE MAY BE (1982)
   J.P. Tarcher Inc., 9110 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, Ca. 90069

3. Hendricks, Gay and Wills, Russel
   THE CENTERING BOOK - Awareness activities for children, parents, and teachers (1975)
   Prentice-Hall, Inc. (A Spectrum Book) Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Sources- continued

4. Plum, Lorraine
   FLIGHTS OF FANCY - Ideas and Activities to Foster the Development of Imagination, Relaxation, and Self-Concept (1980)
   A Good Apple Activity Book for Elementary Grades
   (Cassette tape also available)
   Good Apple, Inc., Box 299, Carthage, Ill. 62321

****

Cassette tapes using imagery:

SELF-MANAGEMENT TAPES
1534 Oakstream, Houston, Texas 77043 (713)- 870-1100)

****

Music Suggestions:

1. MUSIC FOR IMAGING
   The Lind Institute, P.O. Box 14487, San Francisco, Ca.,94114

2. SPECTRUM SUITE
   Steve Halpern
   Halpern Sounds, 1775 Old Country Rd. #9, Belmont, Ca. 94002

3. Various cassettes playing environmental sounds such as the seashore etc. are available.

****